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THE WHITE HOUSE

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WASHINGTON

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May 13, 1961
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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

You may be interested to know of the existence of the attached memorandum from Claiborne Pell concerning Cuban policy. It is not necessary to read it since you will be familiar with the argument; but it consists of a fairly intelligent statement of the case against intervention. As you know, Claiborne made a private visit to Cuba in December.

Arthur

Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

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BACKGROUND MEMO ON SENATOR PELL'S THOUGHTS
REGARDING CUBA

I strongly urge that we should not step up overt or covert action in Cuba at this time. Above all, I believe it would be a calamity if American troops should be involved in any way in the near future.

My reasons are:

No revolution can be sparked unless the populace is ready. In this case, my own personal observations in Cuba and the reports of those newsmen and unbiased observers which I have seen, lead me to believe that the majority of Cubans have not yet become sufficiently disillusioned with Castro and, hence, are not ready to rise.

We are all aware that the reaction of our Latin American neighbors to further United States intervention would, in general, be bad, as it would be throughout the world. Perhaps the best evidence of the seriousness of recent Latin American reaction was the demonstration in Uruguay, the most Democratic Latin American country and a traditional friend of ours. I understand it was one of the largest demonstrations that has occurred there since the War - and it was directed entirely against our action in Cuba.

I believe that the impact in the United Nations of further American intervention would be particularly harmful. Moreover, if we should directly intervene in Cuba to depose a still popularly supported government, it would, of course, make it inconsistent and illogical for our representatives in New York to protest similar Soviet attempts in other countries.

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The counter argument to the effect that we are "pacific" because we are not taking more action is usually advanced by people from the relatively small professional and entrepreneurial segments of Latin American society. But, these are the very groups toward which, because of their ability to speak English and their personal attractiveness, our own representatives from the State Department, the CIA, and other Government agencies tend to gravitate.

Finally, when it comes to the views of Cuban refugees themselves, long personal experience in dealing with refugees and emigré political figures has made me extremely leery of evaluations made by such groups.

I am fully aware that regimes like Castro's do not simply wither away and die. Like a boil, they sometimes have to be surgically removed. But, the boil must first come to a head and this means, as you suggest, a period of waiting. Cuban people will do the operation themselves.

If they don't, then, when the boil has reached its head, when the Cubans are disenchanted, and when public opinion in Latin America is galvanized, more direct action might appropriately be taken. Under such conditions it might be possible to do this through the Organization of American States--a condition that does not exist today.

In the meantime, I believe there are many positive measures we can take, of which the Alliance for Progress program is the most important. If we can make this truly a long-term measure and make sure that it is implemented so that the fruits of progress will reach all segments of the various populations, I believe it will be successful beyond all hope and will demon-

I also believe that our policy of making clear our dislike of all dictators is most correct. In my opinion, we should never yield to the temptation to relax this policy on the fallacious grounds that we must be friends with anyone who opposes Castro.

We have already had indications that positive/programs designed to alleviate conditions under which Castroism can flourish may find increasingly sympathetic climate in Latin America. Brazil has indicated that they are now becoming worried. This is quite an admission from the Quinteto regime. There have also been anti-Castro demonstrations in Costa Rica. There is good reason to believe that Brazil and Costa Rica are not alone in their concern.

If the Communists do build up missile bases or participate in some other form of overt aggressive activity toward the United States from the Cuban beachhead, we may eventually be forced to take action. But, if we do, we must do so, being aware of the inconsistency of saying that it is all right for us to have missile sites in Turkey, near the boundary of our enemy, while at the same time it is wrong for our enemy to have missile sites near us.

My hope would be that, if the time arises we must take action against missile sites in Cuba, our ICBM program will be advanced to such an extent that we would take the position that we no longer need missile sites in Turkey and could dispense with them, while at the same time bearing down on the Cuban missile sites.